

## **HIST 232: Medieval Europe, 400-1000**

Grinnell College, Fall 2023

TTh 1:00-2:20 p.m., HSSC N2110

### **Syllabus subject to change**

Assistant Professor Catherine Chou ([choucath@grinnell.edu](mailto:choucath@grinnell.edu))

Office Hours: TTh 2:30-4:30 p.m. and by appointment, HSSC N3162. [Sign up here!](#)

### **Course Description**

This course dramatizes the medieval era as both a mystery and a succession crisis:

1. Why did the Roman Empire – which reached its height in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE – break apart politically, leaving the “Byzantine” Empire in the east and new barbarian kingdoms to the west?
2. Which of the successor kingdoms and empires – and beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, Islamic caliphates – had the best claim to being the rightful inheritor to the Roman Empire?
3. Why did the swath territory we now call Western Europe end up becoming (largely) religiously united – under the Roman Catholic Church – but politically divided into individual kingdoms with varying ethnic and group identities, during the period from 400 to 1000 CE?

### **Required Books and Readings**

1. Textbook: Judith M. Bennett, *Medieval Europe: A Short History* (Oxford University Press, 2020). This is the 12<sup>th</sup> edition, but you can purchase the 11<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>. **Do not neglect the textbook!** E-book options are available here through [VitalSource](#), or you can order a new or used copy through [Abe Books](#) or [Amazon](#).
2. Course Packet: contains daily readings

\*NB: Other readings may occasionally be handed out in class and/or posted to P-web

### **Assignments and Grading Breakdown**

Attendance and Participation: 20% (essentially 1% a class, beyond two excused absences)

Two 1500-word papers: 30% (15% each)

Outline for Paper #1: 09/11

Final draft of Paper #1: 09/22

Outline for Paper #2: 10/01

Final draft of Paper #2: 10/13

Exam: 20% - due 11/21

Final Project: 25% - due 12/14

Scaffolding Assignment #1: 11/16

Scaffolding Assignment #2: 12/02

Hosting a class feast: 5% - 11/02 or 11/03

### **Attendance and Participation (20%)**

Attendance is compulsory and the primary predictor of your success in class. We are in this journey together. “Class” is the students coming together to analyze the readings: developing incisive questions, identifying significant passages, tracing common themes, providing evidentiary support for your arguments, and responding productively to critiques. There is no replacement for class, no substitute for showing up together in community.

Please prepare for each class by:

1. [Checking the class Google Doc](#) for announcements, reminders, and daily analysis questions (to be completed before each session). You should be prepared to write a short paragraph or two for each daily analysis question, although your style can be informal.
2. Using my notes on Perusall to guide your reading. **Our course code for Perusall is CHOU-267KB**. The daily analysis questions are repeated in Perusall, marked with an orange question mark. Annotations for your own benefit are “untagged” (the question marks are greyed out).
3. Bringing your course packet with you, so that we can all be on the same page during discussion.

### **2 x 1500-word Response Papers – 40% (see above for draft & final due dates)**

Twice during the semester, you will write a 1500-word paper based on our class readings and discussions. Please submit an outline a week in advance of the deadline, drawing on additional secondary or primary sources that we did not cover together in class. Then, based on feedback from me (and potentially a writing tutor), please revise and complete the paper (20% each).

Outlines should consist of:

1. A complete introductory paragraph, including your analytical question and thesis
2. A complete first body paragraph, including a topic sentence and the evidence and analysis you will use to support it (footnotes required)
3. The remainder of your paragraphs (about four or five more) sketched out in bullet points. Begin with your topic sentences for each and include the quotations/evidence you will use to make your case. I should be able to clearly follow the logic of your argument.

All the writing you produce for this class should be footnoted in Chicago-style format. For more information on footnoting, see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/03/>

### **Exam – 20%** (due 11/21)

There will be one exam for the class, about three-quarters of the way through the term. The exam is open book, so take notes in class and as you read! You may not, however, consult with one another or use online resources aside from what is posted on P-web, Perusall, or the class Google Docs.

### **Hosting a Class Feast – 5%** (Tentatively 11/02 or 11/03)

We will be using the Global Kitchen to recreate medieval-era desserts and put on a class feast. In groups, you will prepare a dessert for consumption and a primary source for discussion with your fellow classmates and guests.

### **Final Project – Medieval History Textbook – 25%** (due 12/14, plus scaffolding dates)

Your final project will consolidate the content, historiography, and methodologies you learned in class, while allowing you to delve more deeply into a particular unit. In small groups, you will create a textbook for an early

modern global history course. Each person will write their own introductory “chapter” to the textbook (based on the essay you write for the exam). Each person will also write one content “chapter” of the textbook. You will have a chance to trade research ideas and resources with your classmates, but your grades for the project are individual (based on the writing you submit).

### **Late Assignment Policy**

Every student is entitled to two 24-hour grace periods to use on the 1000-word response papers, exams, or final project. You must notify me if you plan to take an extension. Once you have used your grace periods, late assignments will be docked by 1/3 of a grade the first day, and another 1/3 of a grade each week thereafter.

### **Honor Code**

Please familiarize yourself with the Grinnell Student Handbook honesty policies and abide by them.

### **Accommodations**

If you have any documented needs that require accommodation, please do not hesitate to let me know. [More details are available here.](#)

### **Readings and Topics**

Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup> – Introductory Lecture (Week One)

- **How did Christianity develop from a Middle Eastern cult into the dominant religion of the post-classical Mediterranean world?**

Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup> (Week Two)

1. Mark Humphries, “Christianity and Paganism in the Roman Empire, 250-450 CE”, in *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity* (Wiley Blackwell, 2018), p. 61-80

Thursday, August 31<sup>st</sup> (Week Two)

1. Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, “Creeds, Councils, and Doctrinal Development”, in *The Early Christian World* (Wiley Blackwell, 2017), p. 631-646.

Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup> (Week Three)

1. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (New City Press, 2007)

Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> (Week Three)

1. Ralph W. Mathisen, “Barbarian Bishops and the Churches ‘in Barbaricis Gentibus’ During Late Antiquity”, *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (July 1997), p. 664-697

- **(Why) did the Roman Empire fall? What is the significance of claiming that it did not “fall”, but was reorganized or slowly dissolved instead?**

Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup> – Outline for Paper #1 due

Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> (Week Four)

1. Peter J. Heather, Chapter 9, “End of Empire”, in *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> (Week Four)

1. Peter J. Heather, Chapter 10, “The Fall of Rome”, in *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> (Week Five)

1. Salvian, *On the Government of God*, trans. Eva Matthews Sanford (Columbia University Press, 1930)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>How was the Mediterranean region transformed in a post-imperial world? How were old and new peoples (re)constituted in the Early Middle Ages?</b></li></ul> |
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Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup> (Week Five)

1. Robin Whelan, “Arianism in Africa”, in *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed* (Routledge, 2014)

Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> – Final draft of Paper #1 due

Tuesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> (Week Six)

1. Yitzhak Hen, “The Merovingian Polity: A Network of Courts and Courtiers”, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* (Oxford University Press, 2020)

Thursday, September 28<sup>th</sup> (Week Six)

1. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks* (Columbia University Press, 1916 translation)

Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup> – Outline for Paper #2 due

Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> (Week Seven)

1. Jonathan J. Arnold, Chapter 3, “*Princeps Romanus*” and Chapter 4, “The Imperial Image”, in *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup> (Week Seven)

1. Santiago Castellanos, Chapter 2, “Political Overview: The Beginnings of the Gothic Kingdom in Iberia”, in *The Visigothic Kingdom in Iberia: Construction and Invention* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>How did the rise of the ‘sibling cultures’ of Byzantium and early Islam contribute to the formation of a distinctively ‘Western’ Europe?</b></li></ul> |
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Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup> (Week Eight)

1. Anthony Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome, from Empire to Nation-State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium’s Roman Identity”, in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> (Week Eight) – No reading, time to work on papers

Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup> – Final draft of Paper #2 due

**Fall Break :)**

Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> (Week Nine)

1. Andrew Louth, “Justinian and His Legacy”, in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500-1492* (Cambridge University Press, 2019)

Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> (Week Nine)

1. Procopius, *Secret History*, ed. Peter Sarris (Penguin, 2007)

Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup> (Week Ten)

1. The Quran, ed. A.J. Droge (Equinox Publishing, 2013)

Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> (Week Ten) –

Possible hold for feast day!

Library session to get started on final project

Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> (Week Eleven, Election Day)

1. Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton University Press, 2001)

Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup> (Week Eleven)

1. Corisande Fenwick, Chapter Fourteen, “The Umayyads and North Africa”, in *The Umayyad World* (Taylor & Francis, 2020)

Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> (Week Twelve)

1. Janina M. Safran, Chapter 1, “The Structuring of Umayyad Rule”, in *Defining Boundaries in Al-Andalus: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Islamic Iberia* (Cornell University Press, 2013)

Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup> – Class work time; Scaffolding assignment #1 for final project due

Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup> – Exam posted

Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> – Exam due

**Thanksgiving Break :)**

• **Rome Has Fallen, Long Live Rome? On the succession to the Roman Empire**

Tuesday, November 28<sup>th</sup> (Week Fourteen)

1. Marios Costambeys, Chapter 1, “The Creation of Carolingian Kingship to 800”, in *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup> (Week Fourteen)

1. Stuart Airlie, Chapter 3, “A House and its Head: The Reign of Charlemagne 768-814”, in *Making and Unmaking the Carolingians, 751-888* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020)

Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> – Scaffolding assignment #2 for final project due

Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> (Week Fifteen)

1. Julia Smith, *Europe After Rome: A New Cultural History, 500-1000* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> (Week Fifteen)

Final class; brief presentations

Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> (Exam week) – Final project due